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Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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Let us get the good out of our circumstances by all means, but as a matter of fact it is not our circumstances but ourselves that choke the spring. We are sad and not glad because we are sorry for ourselves. Somebody has trodden on our toes, somebody has said the wrong word, has somehow offended our sense of self-importance, and behold the Dæmon of self-pity digs diligently at his rubbish heap, and casts in all manner of poor and paltry things to check the flow of our spring of Gladness. Some people are sorry for themselves by moments, some for days together, and some carry all their life long a grudge against their circumstances, or burn with resentment against their friends.

We need only look this matter in the face to see how sad and wrong a thing it is not to be glad, and to say to ourselves, "*I can, because I ought!*" Help comes to those who endeavour and who ask. We may have to pull ourselves up many times a day, but every time we give chase to the black dog the easier we shall find it to be gay and good. The outward and visible sign of gladness is cheerfulness, for how can a dour face and sour speech keep company with bubbling gladness within? The inward and spiritual grace is contentment, for how can the person who is glad at heart put himself out and be dissatisfied about the little outside things of life? "Rejoice evermore, and again I say, rejoice."

## A PLEA FOR BROTHERS.

BY MRS. POWELL.

THIRTY or forty years ago it was quite an unusual thing to find educated young women living alone, or alone with young female friends other than sisters. Now, partly because of the professions they take up, which require that they should be where their work is, partly because of the determination to secure independence, which is a feature of the age, the thing is common enough. Common enough! we should like to say far too common, but that is not our point just now: it is of young men that we wish to speak.

In the old days when women still led "sheltered" lives, during all the years of last century and long before it, young men of, say, eighteen to eight-and-twenty have lived alone or with other young men only, and they and their country have suffered in consequence.

Many must do it. True, many must do it, but not all who do; many are none the worse, some are even the better for this way of life. This may be, but many are the worse, and some even are much the worse. This living alone—or, at least, unattached to any household—is common to literally every position, but take as examples young men in the middle and upper middle classes of life. What about young men articled to solicitors as soon as they leave school? Young men "learning the business" in a brewery or any other large "concern," also beginning about 19. Medical students? Some of these can live in hostels, more or less under control, we believe, but an immense number are in lodgings. Curates? who often cannot be in clergy-houses, but fortunately have to be older than others mentioned above. Young journalists? also many in number. Anyone can think of countless instances of what is meant.

It is generally admitted that women suffer in character more than men from the absence of any domestic milieu, but on the other hand they understand much better than men how to create one, even in lodgings, and even when working hard for their living. Young ladies, too, have very much oftener than their brothers the choice of living at home if they will.

It is for those boys and youths who must perforce turn out and live in lodgings or boarding-houses for whom we are pleading. Cannot the sisters of such more frequently than they do spare a few years to live with their brothers? There are many difficulties in the way.

First, there is that of expense. The young man may, or may not, be paying his own expenses; the parents hardly see their way to pay for the girl. She goes in with the others at home, it is quite a different question.

In answer to this it must be remembered that it always costs less than as much again to keep a second person, and this is especially true when the first is a man and the second a woman. Besides, a good sister should be able to economize for her brother, even while making him much more comfortable than he would be without her. Of course she must not expect to have the comforts and luxuries of her own home, and in many cases she will naturally have much less social position. A certain amount of self-sacrifice will be required, but so it is in everything worth doing.

Then there is the question of insufficient chaperonage. The age at which a girl can dispense with more than her brother gives her must vary with his character and her own, but, given some sense on his side and a good deal on hers, she ought to be equal to the position at say two-and-twenty. One might imagine on first thought that an elder sister would be better than a younger to live with a brother, and so she may be, if a quite wise woman, but if she is or has been accustomed to dictate, there will probably be difficulties—a man likes to be first in his own little circle. We think a younger one has a better chance, but there can be no rule.

Then thirdly, there is the difficulty of sparing the girl from home. The old answer when there is a question of sparing her for philanthropic or foreign mission work is that the parents find they can spare her when it comes to a happy marriage. And this is not generally a question of sparing her altogether to the brother. It is by its nature a temporary arrangement. The girl may marry herself. According to statistics her brother will most probably do so. For many reasons the arrangement may cease to be necessary or desirable. And also she can much more probably than when married spend two or three months at home every year.

The question arises whether, when girls have to earn their own living, they still could not live with a brother, instead of alone or with a lady friend. Perhaps brother and sister want to work in different places, but, again, a little self-sacrifice on the part of either might make it possible for both to find employment reasonably near to one another.

And now let us consider some of the advantages of such partnerships:

- (1) It is for both an excellent preparation for matrimony.
- (2) Unlike matrimony it can be tried as an experiment, which can be given up without ill-feeling if unsuccessful.
- (3) It gives a girl who, perhaps, is one of a large family a sphere of her own in which to expand and grow.
- (4) It restrains a young man and keeps up his connection with home; for the sister will be constantly writing to and hearing from home, whatever he may do. It often puts off an early and imprudent marriage. In this connection it must be remembered that while girls living alone may, and constantly do, content themselves with female friends only, young men rarely content themselves with men. They will have female society, and, if living alone, unless they are particularly well off in the matter of introductions, will find it for themselves where they can. The less worth having a thing is the easier it is to get, and so, unless the lad is wise and adroit, he turns to those below him as being more accessible.

And, then, beyond these points there is the great matter of the masculine mind acting on the feminine, and *vice versa*. If a girl has a father living whom she respects and loves, his is, perhaps, the masculine mind most suitable to act on her own until she marries. But many girls have not, and many, if they have, leave home, sometimes by necessity, to live with other women. There are exceptions to every rule, but, generally speaking, every household or community with which a man in the one case, or a woman in the other, has hardly any concern, develops narrownesses and bigotry, and possesses certain follies and ignorances which could not exist were both sexes fairly represented in it. A happy marriage beyond its passion, or romance, or tenderness, has a something which you may call friendship, or community of spirit, or what you will. It is really the give-and-take of the

masculine and feminine mind. We should say that every man and woman needs this, if he or she is to be a complete being.

We have spoken of brothers but, without venturing on the difficult question of deceased sisters' husbands, should like to put in a word for grandfathers, uncles, and aunts' widowers. You cannot expect a young girl to give up her life's work to take care of an aged or ageing relative—other than a father or mother—without some compensating provision for the future. To do this might be only to come upon other people for support later on, but it should be remembered that only a minority of women are able to work hard and with spirit after forty-five or fifty, and we think a little calculation and plain speaking might often make a double household possible, especially if the woman is not very young. "Oh! Jane is so happy in her work I would not upset her for the world." "Fanny would be lost without her sister," perhaps the uncle says, "and I could not have them both." And Jane is beginning to know that she is working beyond her powers of mind or of body, and Fanny, who has refused to accept matrimony in the only form in which it has presented itself to her, feels she has it in her to make a man thoroughly comfortable, and would like to try.

We know a man who has living with him his mother, his mother's sister, his own sister, his brother's widow, and his brother's daughter. We are not recommending any such arrangement—it is too severe a test of character—for the man. But still the fact remains that—speaking generally—the solitary man degenerates, and there are unmarried women in numbers who would be better for masculine influence.

And what about aunts? We don't mean the settled aunts with homes of their own, many of whom are second mothers to boys and girls, but the unattached, elastic, juvenile aunt of to-day, on whom forty years or more sit lightly. Could not such an one more often give a year or two to a young nephew? It would tend to keep her young and interested in the ways of the young. It would not be likely to be for any length of time. Few of us have nephews such as the poet Gray, who lived with aunts almost all the days of his life.

But to return to our main topic—brothers and sisters. One's experience is always limited, and the subject is a

large one. Still we have observed two occupations in which the joint work of brothers and sisters seems especially successful—farming and the keeping of private schools. A farmhouse without a mistress is a poor place, and besides guiding the house she has a great deal of active work to do, which it is very difficult for a wife to perform always. The same may be said of private schools, especially of preparatory schools, which, of course, take young children. It is well known that some of the very best preparatory schools in the country are managed in this way. Then we think that in retail trade a great deal is done by brothers and sisters, often, no doubt, by both wife and sister, but in this last case great tact is required and it is beyond our subject.

We should like to put in a word for the unmarried brother who returns, so much more often than he used to do, for some months' holiday from India and the Colonies. He has been very often in an isolated place and a hideous climate. He wants above everything to be out of doors and amused, and with pleasant women. If he has no sisters at home he can turn to the homes of the married sisters—if he has any—and find there children and many other English amenities. But suppose his sisters are all nursing and High School teaching—then let us hope they join him for their summer holiday, instead of going off with other teachers and nurses, which is too often the form their holidays take. Or suppose there are sisters at home, but of that strenuous nature so common to-day—they are shocked that "a grown man should want to play games in the morning," as they express it. They perhaps look at him critically over the top of their spectacles and make him hasten his next visit to friends. He may have come back to look for a wife and wants the sympathetic "assistance" in the French sense of a sister. She should be ready to lend it for her own sake as well as his. She should not give the impression that she thinks such matters nonsense, and that she ought to be doing what she calls real things all the time. His mother, if she is alive, will no doubt do her best, but it is seldom that she is equal to active companionship with him out of doors.

And apart from these special cases, if unmarried brothers and sisters must live apart they miss a great opportunity of pleasure and mutual improvement by not taking their

holidays together, especially if a little travelling is possible to them. Beautiful memories in common form one of the strongest links we have to each other, and the age at which such journeyings are most often possible is the best for vivid impressions, as it is for health and adventure. An expedition with a girl or woman friend is a great rest and change for a woman whose days are for the most part full of the care of father, husband, brothers or sons, or, as in some cases, of three out of four of these. In the same way the young man who lives with his mother and sisters only, or passes his hours of work with women principally, will do well to get a male friend for his holiday—but with these exceptions a mixture of the sexes is best.

Then there is the large question of whether sisters could not more often accompany brothers into the wilds—but this is a difficult matter and can only be treated by those who know the conditions of the country in which the brothers live and the character of the girls it is proposed to send out. Any generalizing on the subject must be impossible, but with regard to brothers and sisters living together in England we maintain that it is possible to generalize enough to say that the thing should be done, and done much more often than it is.

Perhaps this age requires it more than any of the preceding for several reasons:

(1) A boy is now very rarely educated at home—often he is sent away at eight years old to be there no more for a permanency—and so he has less than ever of home influence.

(2) As we have seen, girls and older women are becoming more and more independent of men, partly because they are much better able to earn their own living than formerly, and partly because their lives are so much more full of interests than they were.

(3) It is so easy to move about, that they can make far more friends among their own sex than was possible fifty years ago.

(4) From various causes marriages are made much later in life now. Is the man, who by himself is so confessedly helpless, to be without his "helpmeet" for so long, when there are so many capable and sensible unmarried sisters available?

And the girl who stands by her brother will have her reward. He may not become a Herschell, a Wordsworth, a Rénan—all variously supported and inspired by their sisters—but it is most desirable that she should think he may.

Perhaps of all the stories one reads of great brothers and sisters, the most touching and bracing is that of the Herschells. Herself a great scientist, it never seems to have occurred to Caroline Herschell to compare herself with her brother; though so exceptional in powers of mind, she was yet true woman enough to feel his marriage deeply, but she conquered this feeling and remained near him throughout his life, contented not to be first with him, more than contented that his work should be put before hers, and this is the spirit in which the sister should deal with the brother—she should be more than contented that his work should be put before hers. At home she may meet with that exaggerated appreciation parents so often show their children—later her husband may find all her acts and performances charming. With the brother she will, more likely than not, find herself much more severely judged. He will probably if very young quite frankly look upon his own affairs as the only ones of any importance, and it will be part of her work, consciously or better still unconsciously, to alter this.

And if he has not it in him to be great, if the most that can be hoped is that he will not make moral or worldly shipwreck, will she not be all the more wanted? It is bad enough to be a weak woman. It is terrible to be a weak man. In taking a husband of such sort knowingly, few women would feel justified, but there is no equal reason why she should not help to "lift up the hands that hang down and the feeble knees" of a brother, and through a long life he may bless the years, few or many, she spent with him.